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SURFING THE WAVES OF POPULAR CULTURE
BY MICHAEL GILTZ & FRIENDS

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Weekend Wrapup: The National, Cheez Doodles, the Beatles, Stew and a Transvestite Comic

My head is still spinning from all the stuff I did this weekend. Thanks to press invites and the such, I did it all for the grand total of \$49. Who says New York is expensive?

The National at BAM *** -- I wish I liked them more, but there's no denying this NYC band can build up a head of steam musically. I find them more interesting melodically than lyrically and the lead singer unfortunately reminds me of the guy from Crash Test Dummies. The crowd loved it when he shredded his voice on some ecstatic riff. Intelligent and fun, if not overwhelming. \$16 ticket. (I was in the front row of the THIRD level. Never been that high before at BAM but for a rock show it really didn't matter.)

The Strawberry New Play Festival ** 1/2 -- Six one act plays, including one by Jack Slattery, the 16 year old son of friends I met via Yankee Stadium. "Cold April" by Jack's teacher actually won Best Play. Though I found it a bit noble, Erica Lauren as Mosi was solid. "Rodwart's World" was a so-so work about a therapist and her interfering, middle-aged son Rodwart. "An Acute Triangle" was an uninspired tale of two brothers desired by a female vampire who can't choose between them enlivened somewhat by the lead actors. "Marked" was an ambitious, challenging piece about an elderly woman refusing to take her meds who is paranoid and the son trying to help her. Unfortunately, the lead female repeatedly stumbled over her lines, making it impossible to get lost in the story. "What Cheer, Iowa" was my favorite of the fest, a rambunctious comedy about people trapped in a waiting room hoping their cars will pass inspection. The only flaw was a secondary character wildly overacted, for which I blame the director who otherwise did a fine job keeping it moving. "Can Cheese Doodles Do You Harm?" was -- I'm delighted to say -- a close second in my favorite of the plays. (It should be Cheez Doodles. by the way. Jack.)

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